sector. Therefore, will the hon. Minister consider increasing the allocation to the better performing States like Tamil Nadu to help in increasing the crop production further?

The contribution of agriculture to the GDP has been declining over the years. That is why the hon. Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu has launched commendable projects for water management and wasteland development. In view of the financial constraints of Tamil Nadu, will the Government provide a special package for wasteland development and watershed projects in Tamil Nadu?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That is enough. Question Hour is over.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO STARRED QUESTIONS

Safety surcharge on railway fares

*421. DR. ABRAR AHMED:
SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Railways propose to raise Rs. 5000 crores through levy of safety surcharge on passenger fares towards a non lapsable railway safety fund over a period of six years; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI NITISH KUMAR): (a) and (b) Yes Sir. A non-lapsable Special Railway Safety Fund (SRSF) of Rs. 17,000 crores has been created from 1 st October, 2001 for a period of six years to wipe out arrears of replacement of over aged safety related assets of the Railways. The Railways' contribution to this Fund, which is to be around Rs. 5,000 crores is to be raised through the levy of a Safety Surcharge on passenger fares *w.e.f.* 1.10.2001.

To end of March, 2003, Railways have cumulatively collected Rs. 907 crores as surcharge against a budgeted amount of Rs. 1,260 crores. The shortfall in collection has been made good from Railways' internal revenues. Budget Estimates, 2003-04 envisage a surcharge collection of Rs. 710 crores.